

PT2661
.Y56
B58
2003
c.2

MAY AYIM

Blues in Black and White

A Collection of Essays, Poetry, and Conversations

Translated and with an Introduction by
Anne V. Adams

Africa World Press, Inc.

P.O. Box 1892
Trenton, NJ 08607



P.O. Box 48
Asmara, ERITREA

**STONE CENTER LIBRARY
UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA
AT CHAPEL HILL**

Africa World Press, Inc.

P.O. Box 1892
Trenton, NJ 08607



P.O. Box 48
Asmara, ERITREA

Copyright © 2003 Orlando Frauenverlag

First printing, 2003

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

Cover and book design: Roger Dormann

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Ayim, May, 1960-1996

[Selections. English. 2002]

Blues in black and white: a collection of essays, poetry and conversations / by May Ayim; translated and with an introduction by Anne V. Adams.

p. cm.

"The translated poems presented in this collection ... are taken from Ayim's two volumes Blues in schwarz-weiss and Nachtgesang" --

Translator's introd.

ISBN 0-86543-889-7 - ISBN 0-86543-890-0 (pbk.)

1. Blacks-Germany-Literary collections. 2. Germany-Race relations-Literary collections. 3. Ayim, May, 1960-Translations into English. I. Adams, Anne V. II. Title.

PT2661.Y56 B58 2002

831'.914--dc21

2002002720

Table of Contents

<i>Reggae Fi May Ayim</i>	
by Linton Kwesi Johnson.....	1
<i>blues in black and white</i>	4
 Translator's Introduction	
by Anne V. Adams	7
<i>afro-german I</i>	14
<i>afro-german II</i>	16
 A Letter from Muenster.....	18
<i>almost not at all</i>	22
<i>fatherseeking</i>	23
<i>mama</i>	24
 We Want Out of Our Isolation: A Conversation.....	25
<i>calm of the storm</i>	29
<i>sister</i>	30
 One of the Others	31
<i>between avenui and kreuzberg</i>	38
<i>distant ties</i>	41
<i>darkness</i>	43
 1990: Home/land and Unity from an	
Afro-German Perspective.....	45
<i>borderless and brazen</i>	48
<i>no more rotten gray—for a colorful republic</i>	60
 "Black Rage/White Outrage": A Conversation	64
<i>arrogant question</i>	71
<i>invitation</i>	72

blues in black and white

over and over again
there are those who are
dismembered, sold off and distributed
those who always are, were, and shall remain the others
over and over again
the actual others declare themselves
the only real ones
over and over again
the actual others declare on us
war

it's the blues in black-and-white
1/3rd of the world
dances over
the other
2/3rds
they celebrate in white
we mourn in black
it's the blues in black-and-white
it's the blues

a reunited germany
celebrates itself in 1990
without its immigrants, refugees, jewish and black people
it celebrates in its intimate circle
it celebrates in white

but it's the blues in black-and-white
it's the blues
united germany united europe united states
celebrates 1992

500 years since columbus
500 years — of slavery, exploitation and genocide in the
americas
asia
and africa

1/3rd of the world unites
against the other 2/3rds
in the rhythm of racism, sexism, and anti-semitism
they want to isolate us; eradicate our history
or mystify it to the point of
irrecognition
it's the blues in black-and-white
it's the blues

but we're sure of it — we're sure
1/3rd of humanity celebrates in white
2/3rds of humanity doesn't join the party

1990

(Translation: Tina Campt; from *blues in schwarz weiss*)

afro-german I

You're Afro-German?
...oh, I see: African and German.
An interesting mixture, huh?
You know: there are people that still think
Mulattos won't get
as far in life
as whites

I don't believe that.
I mean: given the same type of education...
You're pretty lucky you grew up *here*.
With German parents even. Think of that!

D'you want to go back some day, hm?
What? You've never been in your Dad's home
country?
That's so sad...Listen, if you ask me:
A person's origin, see, really leaves quite a
Mark.
Take me, I'm from Westphalia,
and I feel
that's where I belong...

Oh boy! All the misery there is in the world!
Be glad
You didn't stay in the bush.
You wouldn't be where you are today!

I mean, you're really an intelligent girl, you
know.
If you work hard at your studies,

May Ayim

you can help your people in Africa, see:

That's

What you're predestined to do,
I'm sure they'll listen to you,
while people like us –
there's such a difference in cultural levels...

What do you mean, do something here? What
On earth would you want to do here?
Okay, okay, so it's not all sunshine and roses.

But I think everybody should put their own
house in order first!

1985

(Translation by Ilse Müller; from *blues in schwarz weiss*)

afro-german II

...hm, I understand.

You can thank your lucky stars you're not
Turkish, right?
I mean: it's awful the way they pick on
Foreigners,
do you ever run into that at all?

"..."

Well, sure, but *that's* the kind of problem I
have, too.
I feel a person can't blame everything on the
color of their skin, and things are never
easy for you if you're a woman.

Take this friend of mine:
she's pretty heavy,
and does she have problems!
Compared to her, you know, you seem pretty
laid-back.

Anyway, I feel
that blacks have kept a sort of natural
outlook on life.

While here: everything's pretty screwed up,
right?
I think I'd be glad if I were you.
German history isn't something one

May Ayim

Can really be proud of, is it.
And you're not that black anyway, you know.

1985

(Translation by Ilse Müller; from *blues in schwarz weiss*)

almost not at all

i never knew you at all
and, after we
saw each other
for five minutes
years ago
hardly at all

five minutes brown hair brown eyes nervous mouth
five minutes and back then nine months
forced child/motherhood
we never knew each other at all
and now, almost not at all

1985
for Ursula

(Translation by Anne V. Adams; from *blues in schwarz weiss*)

May Ayim

fatherseeking

when I needed you
I held the picture on the wall
to be true
the most beautiful thing I had from you
the only thing

you were
as I wished you to be
serious and smart and tender. infinitely tender.
face to face
your glance caught me
serious and smart and cold. bitter cold.
without words

I hung the picture
that dreamed for me
a dream of father
bittersweet the parting

I go and wonder

1985
for Nuwokpor

(Translation by Anne V. Adams; from *blues in schwarz weiss*)

mama

tell me mama
 what was it like for you then
 when you picked me up
 one and a half years of age
 tell me were you
 happy about me

tell me and what
 was it like with me on the street
 white mother black child
 was it terrible
 and beautiful
 always being in the center

tell me mama
 why did you
 beat me so often and so hard
 just because i wet the bed
 even at the age of twelve
 did you really believe
 i only wanted to harm you

and mama
 after years of separation
 we now chatter along
 even though there is so much to say
 the poem in my pocket
 i'm silent before you
 and i wish
 you would ask something

(Translation by Ekpenyong Ani; from *nachtgesang*)

We want out of our isolation

May Ayim and John Amoateng-Kantara belonged to the first members of the group "Initiative of Blacks in Berlin." In 1987 they spoke with the (now defunct) magazine AWA-FINNABA. (Original reprint)

May: We are called "Initiative Schwarze in Berlin," all of us Black Germans feel this isolation and would like to meet. When I was growing up with my white foster parents, I was the only black. At school and later at university in Bavaria I was alone. Here in Berlin, I started meeting other black Germans like Nii and Martin (co-founders of the group) and the idea to organize ourselves crystallized. We advertised in the papers and invited people by word-of-mouth. About 30 people ranging between 14 and 28 years of age turned up. Amongst us are Afro-Germans (in the majority), Afro-British and even Afro-Russians.

There's another group in Frankfurt/Wiesbaden of about 20 members between 30-40 years of age. Our ideas are similar but they call themselves "Initiative Schwarze Deutsche." They exist for two years now. There are a few people in Aachen, Cologne and Stuttgart who are beginning to organize themselves.

John: The reason why people have joined our group, is for me an emotional one, this feeling to get to know other black Germans. Up to now most of us have been living in isolation. What we have lacked is a disciplined and engaged group which will bring us together. As a group we can better react to racism, protect ourselves. We need to lobby to speak out our interests, so as to check racism.

the man made
the woman have a child
the woman made the child
live in a home

a mo
a fa
a chi

the mother disappeared
in the darkness of time
the father came
now and then
to visit

the child stayed
alone most of the time

the first word
was just a word

MAMA

1991

(Translation by Ekpennyong Ani; from *blues in black and white*)

**1990: Home/land and Unity from an
Afro-German Perspective**

The anthology Entfernte Verbindungen [Distant Ties], published in 1993, from which this text is extracted, was the product of a working group consisting of women of diverse origins, who met regularly over the course of three years.

For me, the past two years have been shaped by rapid development and changes, not only politically but also personally. I think back to the end of 1989 and going into 1990, to the bewilderment and contradictions, the fits and starts, the recollections of things suppressed, the new discoveries.

At the time I was moving as though on an unmoored boat. I was so busy trying to avoid shipwreck in all of the whirlpool of the times, that it was nearly impossible for me to take full account of the events going on around me with any nuanced understanding. In retrospect I see some pieces only in bare outline; other pieces are much clearer viewed from a distance. It seems as though the Wall between the two Germanys cast its stony shadow well in advance of its crumbling. That shadow was cast directly into the heads of those who had accepted it, enclosed and adorned themselves with it: the Wall's shadow had been cast into our East-West brains. People from the two Germanys met one another like twins who know about their common parents but had lived separated from each other since birth.

The initial euphoria erupted as the joy of reunion between two relative strangers, trying to deny the fact that their relations up to that point had been characterized by hostilities from a distance. All across the media-landscape the talk was of German-German brothers and sisters, of united and re-united, of solidarity and feelings for fellow human beings....Indeed,

even terms like home, folk, and fatherland were suddenly—again—on the lips of many. Again making the rounds were words that had been used only with caution or even shunned in both German states since the Holocaust, with uninterrupted favor only in rightwing circles. Times change, people, too. Perhaps the questions of the times only change a bit and people's answers, hardly at all.

The early excitement of encounter crumbled with unpredictable speed, and the deceitfully won unity suffocated just as quickly under the tight artificial cloak of liberal German folksiness. Of course, previously you saw the little 'one-Germany' flags and banners waving. Germany jackets, t-shirts, and stickers were everywhere. I was amazed, in November, 1989, how rapidly and in what enormous quantities all sorts of black-red-gold paraphernalia appeared in the stores and even at flea markets—and in demand everywhere. I could not comprehend what was going on in the deeper recesses of people's heads and feelings. The white, Christian-German-Collective guilt complexes had apparently dissolved overnight, thereby tearing the present away from the past. Who were the consumers, who the producers, of the freedom-for-sale, and for whom and how many was there space in the cherished new home? Who was embracing each other in German-German reunification, and who was embraced, pulled in, bumped out? Who, for the first time? Who, once again? Who, all along?

Within a few moments reunification led to the birth of a new Federal Republic in—as far as the GDR was concerned—a not particularly new guise. The GDR was left to the side. As the Wall fell, many rejoiced; others felt their heads spinning.

German Fa(r)ther-land...

My fatherland is Ghana, my mother tongue is German; homeland, I carry in my shoes. When the Wall fell, I felt, for a while, the fear of being struck down. It wasn't much, not a great fear, but more than usual.

Since 1984 I have been living and working in West Berlin and feel more at home in this city than anywhere else. Due to my underdeveloped sense of direction I get lost everyday in the streets, but compared with other cities where I lived and studied before, Berlin has always been a place where I felt pretty much at home. My skin color is not an unusual attention-grabber on the streets; here I'm not praised everyday for my good German, and, at seminars, programs, or parties, only seldom do I find myself the only black among an indeterminate number of whites. I still have to explain myself a lot, but not constantly. I remember former times, in small West German cities, where I often had the feeling of being under constant observation, of getting sick of constantly searching and questioning gazes. I remember days when I would feel especially lonely or unbearably exposed and would be on the lookout for black people while shopping or riding the bus. In Berlin, this anonymous city with its international face, those recollections faded very quickly from my memory. With the fall of the Wall and the period following it they returned, as though out of a dusty drawer, into my daily life.

In the days immediately following November 9, 1989, I noticed that hardly any immigrants or black Germans were to be seen around town, at least only rarely any dark-skinned ones. I wondered why not many Jews were about. I ran into a couple of Afro-Germans whom I had met in East Berlin the previous year, and we were glad to have more chances of getting together now. Moving around alone I wanted to breathe in a bit of the general enthusiasm, to sense the historical

moment and share my reserved joy. Reserved because I had heard about the imminent policy-tightening regarding immigrants and asylum-seekers. And further, like other black Germans and immigrants, I knew that even a German passport did not guarantee an invitation to the East-West festivities. We sensed that along with the imminent intra-German union a growing closing off from outside would ensue—an outside that would include us. Our participation in the celebration was not invited.

The new "We" in "this our country"—Chancellor Kohl's favorite expression—did not and does not have a place for everyone.

"Out, nigger, don't you have a home to go to?"

For the first time since I had been living in Berlin I now had to protect myself almost daily against undisguised insults, hostile looks and/or openly racist offenses. As in earlier times I started again, when shopping and on public transportation, to look out for dark faces. A friend of mine, holding her Afro-German daughter on her lap in the S-Bahn,* was told "We don't need your kind anymore. There are already more than enough of us!" A ten-year-old African boy was thrown out of a crowded U-Bahn train to make room for a white German.

Those were incidents in West Berlin in November, 1989, and since 1990 reports of racially motivated attacks primarily on black people have increased, mostly in the eastern part of Germany. Reports like those were at first known only in circles of immigrants and black Germans, the official media reporters hardly taking notice of the violent assaults. I began the year 1990 with a poem:

"borderless and brazen: a poem against the German 'n-not-y.'

i will be african

* S-Bahn: elevated train

*even if you want me to be german
and i will be german
even if my blackness does not suit you
i will go
yet another step further
to the farthest edge
where my sisters — where my brothers stand
where*

o u r

FREEDOM

begins

i will go

*yet another step further and another step and
will return
when i want
if i want
and remain
borderless and brazen*

1990
for Jacqueline and Katharina

(Translation by May Ayim)

As an outgrowth of the "Black History Month" series of programs on topics of black history, culture, and politics, initiated by a black activist group in Berlin, February, 1990, a task force was formed of black groups and individuals, which, among other things, published a first documentation of racist attacks in Berlin and the surrounding area.¹

Around the same time I completed my training as a speech therapist. I remember not only the jittery exam time with

sleepless nights and problems in my love-life, but also the meetings of black political groups at which for the first time we discussed measures for protecting our organizations and our individual persons from racist attacks. Between the two Germanys contacts among black groups and those concerned with immigrant politics intensified, leading to common actions and social gatherings. I was angry and disappointed that the liberation of Mandela received hardly any attention in the German media at that time. For the first time I came to appreciate the invention of cable TV, because I saw at least that not the entire European world was engaged in contemplating its navel.

At demonstrations against the tightening of immigration and asylum law early in the year, white German representation was scarce. The *TAZ*, on April 2, 1990, reported: "German Leftists Absent at Mass Demonstration Protesting Law on Foreigners. Too Foreign?"

I began to get angry over the East-West celebrations and programs that did not incorporate North-South dialog. In the women's movement, too, German-German matters were discussed and celebrated, as though Germany were exclusively white and the center of the world. Conferences and seminars were held, with travel support for women from the GDR, without also considering asylum-seekers, who, whether in East or West Germany, have to squeeze out a minimal existence. This modus operandi was in keeping with the after-thought, half-hearted show of solidarity staged at the governmental level by the "Better Westerners" for the "Poor Easterners."

Thinking back I recall an ad in the movies promoted by the Berlin Senate: East German workers on a construction site in West Germany. A voice off-screen announced that it was GDR citizens who were taking the underpaid jobs and those unattractive to West Germans. The commentator was exhorting the audience, in a manner both urgent and friendly, to graciously receive "the people" who have come "to us" in the

recent weeks and months. Why is it that only white German men are shown, if they were talking about feelings for fellow human beings between women and men from both Germanys? I wholly support a call to solidarity but not one that is silent on the fact that the least attractive and worst-paid jobs go to migrant workers from other European and non-European countries. Where is the call to solidarity with those who, in the tide of German German embrace, are in greatest danger of no longer finding work and housing possibilities and of losing their jobs and training posts? For asylum seekers there were no embracing gestures of support with words of goodwill and discount tickets. On the contrary, the law on temporary or permanent residence especially for people from predominantly poor non-European countries was drastically tightened by means of new legal requirements. Further, as racist violence in the streets was increasing, white citizens and politicians from East and West, until the end of 1990, stood by doing nothing. And also, the "receptivity" and "hospitality" toward white GDR citizens seemed dishonest to me in the face of the attitude toward so-called foreign compatriots, who long before now, had been constantly reminded that the "boat" is full.

Biologist Irenäus Eibl-Dibesfeld, for example, published an article in 1981 with the title "Dangers of Mass Immigration," in which he said:

We should have no delusions: with every immigrant allowed in, we cede ground; and we have to tell the people like it is, for the contexts of large-scale biological integration are just as unclear to them as the possible consequences.²

A clear indication of this is that only certain groups of immigrants are categorically perceived and marginalized as "foreigners," just as black Germans cannot be "real Germans."

A blond, blue-eyed woman told me that white Germans have trouble believing that she comes from Brazil. She would often be asked, "But don't your ancestors come from Germany?" In Brazil, she said, no one had ever doubted her Brazilian origins and her Brazilian nationality. Only in Germany had she begun to reflect on and research her family history. She found out that a long deceased great-grandfather had actually emigrated from Germany to Brazil. Today, whenever she introduces that bit of information into the "Where-are-you-from-conversation," the reaction is not infrequently: "Oh, that's wonderful that your ancestors are from Germany. How do you feel being in your homeland for the first time?" Black Germans have different experiences in this country.

The New German "We": An inclusive and exclusive space?

Franz Beckenbauer commented, as coach of the German soccer team, on his team's victory in the World Championship in the summer of 1990: "For years we've been unbeatable. I'm sorry for the rest of the world, but that's how it is."³ The disturbing vision of a we are-again-somebody Germany took on increasingly real form over the course of 1990, with the growing popularity of racist pronouncements and behaviors. Likewise, the German "we" that had been touted remained split into two different halves. The historic moment which yielded so much counterfeit rhetoric of "revolution" could have been, in both parts of Germany, a moment of critical self-reflection and mutual stimulation for change. Already at the time the Wall fell it was clear that no one was prepared to criticize and reform the FRG as rigorously as was being urged for the GDR. In government circles attention was focused first and foremost on implementing political and economic interests, and so hardly guided by humanitarian ideals.

Hans-Joachim Maaß, a psychotherapist from Halle, is one of those who posed the question in 1990:

Where are the honest politicians of the West, to warn and inform us about the failures and problems in our own system, and not just smugly offer us their "superiority"? Where are the serious reflections about what needs to change in the FRG, so that a unified Germany becomes an opportunity and not a new danger for Europe?³⁴

Since then, two years after the fall of the Wall, the face of the former GDR is no longer recognizable. Textbooks, laws, institutional structures, etc. were either brought into line with those of the former GFR or done away with. Flashing billboards everywhere are a clear indication that capitalism has taken a foothold in even the tiniest village of the five new federal states, and the "Trabis," already a rarity now, seem like relics from the distant past. Considering its total removal, the entire Wall story is now hard even to imagine. The number of jobless, especially women, is climbing at a staggering rate. The re-naming of streets and the removal of certain monuments are among the signs pointing out the new view of the past and the next step into the future as drafted by those in power. What will we remember? What have we already forgotten? I notice that in the renaming of streets in the new states, often names of resistance fighters are replaced by names of flowers. Hence, "Liselotte Herrmann Street" in Erfurt has been recently renamed "Medlar Street." The re-naming of East Berlin's U-Bahn station "Thälmann Street" to "Moor Street" is a sure sign that racist language and associated thinking are tolerated and carried on even in the highest white ranks of the new republic. This is evident as well in the still unchallenged retenti-

tion of street names and monuments in the western part of Germany that glorify colonialists and degrade the colonized.

The silence and denial of racism even on the part of "progressive" leftists and among women's movement women, though unsettling and shocking to me in 1990, hardly surprised me anyway. Undeniably, discussions on the subject of a "multi-cultural FRG" have been on the increase since the mid-'80s. But only in exceptional cases have they effected a change in anyone's actual day-to-day political associations, so that a continuous, egalitarian collaboration with immigrants and black Germans became indispensable and taken for granted, and confronting racism became a constant commitment. The "Second Women's Shelter" in Berlin and Orlanda Women's Press are among the few independent women's projects that have long been committed to quotas for immigrants and black women in their hiring.⁵

Racism is still seen by many white Germans as an exceptional instance and special subject. Hence, immigrants, black Germans, and Jewish people are often only considered and included within the context of special programs, as, for example, "Immigrant Neighbors Week," or a conference on "Migration and Population Policy." This is one facet of unconscious and subtle in- and exclusion. A pertinent comment from Klaus F. Geiger in November, 1989:

The reporter is standing on the Kurfuerstendamm, surrounded by people celebrating the fall of the Wall. He interviews first two or three people from East Berlin, then looks for West Berliners as interviewees. Behind him are standing four or five Turks caught up in the festivities, young men, between 18 and 20 years of age, shifting from one foot to the other, looking expectantly into the camera, making themselves

available but not being pushy. The reporter turns in a circle, seeing no one that he would call a West Berliner, cuts off his search and turns it over to the studio. For today it's about the reunification of two German territories, about the reunification of two peoples, who are German citizens by law. Had the subject of the broadcast been worded "Problems of Foreigners," these young Turkish Berliners would also have been appropriate interviewees—along with a lot of German experts.⁶

Not until the election in the second half of 1990 did the voices of immigrants, black Germans and the Jewish community begin to be heard. At that time conferences and public events on the subject of "Racism" were multiplying, but organized in large part and sometimes exclusively by white Germans. Such was the case, for example, with the conference "Exclusion and Tolerance," held in Eindhoven in November, 1990. Even though black as well as white women scholars from the Netherlands and the Federal Republic gave papers and seminars on the subject, black women were not involved in the conceptualization and execution of the conference. Hence, for the preparations of the next conference the composition of the organizing team was revised. Fortunately, from a few other such events as well, not only were painful wounds left over but also equally fruitful initiatives for real collaboration between black and white women came out of them.

In a society marked by racism and other oppressive mechanisms the real or potential victims in each case are not at the same time the better people. Sometimes I observe, in political black-white situations, that black women or men are given unlimited time to speak, regardless of whether their intervention is useful. Preferential treatment is appropriate and neces-

sary and an important requirement when it's a matter of allocating jobs. But that can't mean "fool's freedom." If we want to work together and regard each other as allies—and that's my assumption—then we have to take each other seriously with the courage to express and take criticism. That goes equally for blacks and whites interacting with and among one another. A particular mark of East-West encounters among whites was and still is the fact that dialog often doesn't happen unless the women and men in the new states come to sit at the discussion table on the western side of Germany. Black Germans and immigrants in the former FRG are also only now beginning to understand that it's not dialog unless their groups in East and West approach each other with equal initiative.

I am becoming increasingly conscious of how much I have been marked by certain experiences in this society and on what points I wish to eradicate or retain those marks. Often, recalling childhood dreams and experiences, I let the adults' comments pass in review, looking for meaningful messages. I dig around for repressed images and warnings. In writing this text I suddenly encountered my grandmother, who died in 1990—actually, my foster mother's mother. I saw her in her cozy kitchen and heard as she spoke with my "brother" and me. We loved her, and she always had a few sweets for us in her cabinet drawer. Now, as I saw her before me, at that moment she was annoyed by the noise we kids were making and called out in a half-joking voice: "It sounds like the Jews' school in here!" Not until later did I flinch, understanding the meaning of her words, when Granny would bend down to the youngest grandchildren with that same saying. And racist expressions came out now and then in our house, seldom consciously nor with evil intent. No one meant to be anti-Semitic or racist. Everyone abhorred the atrocities of the National Socialist past; and, after all, it wasn't just by chance that I had landed as the only black child in this white foster family. Nobody there could

be prejudiced, right? Racism and anti-Semitism were some of the undesirable ingredients of the upbringing that I experienced. I am conscious of it and I won't let it go until I have rooted it out and dismantled it from myself.

Now it's 1992, the European Union is being concluded and in a few weeks the anniversary of German reunification will be celebrated. Daily—just as in summer and fall of last year and the year before last—we learn of new racist and anti-Semitic assaults, of arson against refugee quarters and of mob attacks in East and West Germany. In many places eager bystanders applaud openly or secretly, and politicians appear very concerned for the country's image, but very little for the real and potential victims of the attacks. Interior Secretary Rudolf Seiters had this to say about the escalating violence:

It is certainly the consensus that this is a phenomenon that damages Germany's image in the world and which could lead to the distortion and erosion of the reputation of a Germany hospitable to foreigners, which we must preserve at all costs.⁷

Chancellor Kohl, in his address of August 27, 1992, urged: "The abuse of the right to asylum must finally be resolved. That also includes amending the constitution, which, however, will not solve the problem alone but is a major step toward stemming the abuse of asylum."⁸ Recent weeks have witnessed more discussion of marginalized youth who are currently the primary perpetrators of neo-Nazi attacks. Discussions about the causes of refugee movements are not taking place, nor about measures that could end hunger, war and environmental destruction in poor countries and those which are kept dependent on Europe. An immediate and severe revision to the asylum law portends serious consequences; but even for

the asylum seekers who are allowed to stay, the Federal Republic will, in the foreseeable future, not be a place to freely call "home." The same goes for immigrants, black Germans and Jewish people who have been living here all along.

The open violence in the streets resonates with the words of leading politicians and is, to some extent, their practical application. But I am convinced that we—and I am referring to all people in this country who do not tolerate racism and anti-Semitism—are desirous of and capable of coalitions. There are examples that we can follow or adapt. This is how the "Initiative of Black Germans," which was formed from a small group of Afro-Germans in the mid-80s, now has working and networking groups in a number of cities in the Federal Republic. Organizations of immigrants, black Europeans and Jews have joined in to link up their groups and activities across national boundaries. The "Intercultural Summer Institute for Black Women's Studies" has been held since 1987, with black participants from all continents.

In 1991 the hosts were black German women, and the several week-long seminars were held in Bielefeld, Frankfurt/M., and Berlin. The second conference by and for immigrant, black German, Jewish and women living in exile, which took place in Berlin in the same year, was, above all, an example of support of white Christian secularized women. Excluded as participants, they nevertheless contributed in large numbers through transportation assistance, childcare, providing overnight accommodations. Through their donations they made a critical contribution to the running of the conference. One thing is certain: The global and national structures of dependence as well as the power relations within our personal relationships are unsettling and destructive, but not static. We can bring about change!

Notes

1. Black Unity Committee (ed.), *Dokumentation: Rassistische Überfälle in Berlin und Umgebung* (January-September 1990), Berlin 1990
2. Irenäus Eibl-Eibesfeldt, "Gefahren der Masseneinwanderung," in: *Lutherische Monatshefte*, no. 1, 1981, p. 34.
3. Quoted from Norbert Seitz, "Wir sind halt doch das Volk," in: Arthur Heinrich and Klaus Neumann (eds.), *Alles Banane. Ausblicke auf das endgültige Deutschland*
4. Hans-Joachim Maaz, *Der Gefühlstan Ein Psychogramm der DDR*, Berlin 1990, p. 182.
5. See the contribution by Dagmar Schultz in *Entfernte Verbindungen: Rassismus, Antisemitismus, Klassenunterdrückung*, Berlin 1993.
6. Klaus F. Geiger, "Nationalistische und postnationalistische Diskurse im Verteilungskampf der Bundesrepublik Deutschland," in: Institut für Migrations- und Rassismusforschung (ed.), *Rassismus und Migration in Europa*, Hamburg, Berlin 1992, p. 273.
7. Quoted from Dietrich Leder, "Medientagebuch," in: *Freitag*, 4 September 1992, no. 37.
8. Quoted from Tissy Bruns and Klaus-Peter Klingelschmitt: "Kein Wort der Scham in Bonner Kabinett" in *die Tagesszeitung* 28 August 1992.

they only publish their own stuff
or books by foreigners or mulattos
that's not just neglect
it's also cheating
apparently we're
not exotic enough...

1992

(Translation by Ekpenyong Ani; from *blues in schwarz weiss*)

autumn in germany

it is not true
that it is not true
that's how it was
first at first and then again

that's how it is

“kristallnacht”:
in november 1938
first shattered
were windowpanes
then
again and again
human bones
of jews and blacks
of the weak and the sick
of sinti and roma and
poles of lesbians and
gays of and of
and of and of
and and

first a few then many

more and more:
arms lifted and joined in
applauded clapping
or stealthily gaping
as they
and them
and he and she

and him and her
first once in a while
then again and again

again so soon?

a singular incident:
in november 1990
antonio amadeu from angola
was murdered
in eberswalde
by neo-nazis
his child born shortly after by a
white german
woman
her house
shortly after
trashed

ah yes

and the police
came so late
it was too late
and the newspapers were so short
of words
it equaled silence
and on TV no picture
of this homicide

no comment on the incident:

in the newly united germany
that so much likes to

likes too much
to call itself re-united
it happened
that here and there
it was first houses
then people
that burnt down
first in the east then in the west
then
the whole country

first at first and then again

it is not true
that it is not true
that's how it was

that's how it is:
autumn in germany
i dread the winter

1992

(Translation by May Ayim/Ekpenyong Ani; from *blues in schwarz weiss*)